



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

May 27, 2005

Mr. Jeffrey L. Moore
Brown & Hofmeister, L.L.P.
740 East Campbell Road, Suite 800
Richardson, Texas 75081

OR2005-04669

Dear Mr. Moore:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 227968.

The Roanoke Police Department (the "department"), which you represent, received a request for information pertaining to a specific incident. You claim that portions of the requested information are excepted from disclosure under section 552.130 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.130 excepts from disclosure "information [that] relates to . . . a motor vehicle operator's or driver's license or permit issued by an agency of this state [or] a motor vehicle title or registration issued by an agency of this state." By its terms, section 552.130 excepts from disclosure only information pertaining to motor vehicle records issued by this state. Furthermore, section 552.130 is designed to protect individuals' privacy interests, and the right to privacy expires upon death. *See Moore v. Charles B. Pierce Film Enters., Inc.*, 589 S.W.2d 489, 491 (Tex. App.—Texarkana 1979, writ ref'd n.r.e.); *see also Justice v. Belo Broadcasting Corp.*, 472 F. Supp. 145, 146-47 (N.D. Tex. 1979); Attorney General Opinion H-917 at 3-4 (1976); Open Records Decision No. 272 at 1 (1981). Accordingly, pursuant to section 552.130, the department must withhold the highlighted information only to the extent that it reflects Texas-issued motor vehicle records that pertain to living persons. Information from motor vehicle records not issued by this state or issued to persons who are now deceased may not be withheld under section 552.130.

In summary, Texas-issued motor vehicle record information of living persons must be withheld pursuant to section 552.130 of the Government Code. All other submitted information must be released.

This letter ruling is limited to the particular records at issue in this request and limited to the facts as presented to us; therefore, this ruling must not be relied upon as a previous determination regarding any other records or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For example, governmental bodies are prohibited from asking the attorney general to reconsider this ruling. Gov't Code § 552.301(f). If the governmental body wants to challenge this ruling, the governmental body must appeal by filing suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such an appeal, the governmental body must file suit within 10 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.353(b)(3), (c). If the governmental body does not appeal this ruling and the governmental body does not comply with it, then both the requestor and the attorney general have the right to file suit against the governmental body to enforce this ruling. *Id.* § 552.321(a).

If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, upon receiving this ruling, the governmental body will either release the public records promptly pursuant to section 552.221(a) of the Government Code or file a lawsuit challenging this ruling pursuant to section 552.324 of the Government Code. If the governmental body fails to do one of these things, then the requestor should report that failure to the attorney general's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. The requestor may also file a complaint with the district or county attorney. *Id.* § 552.3215(e).

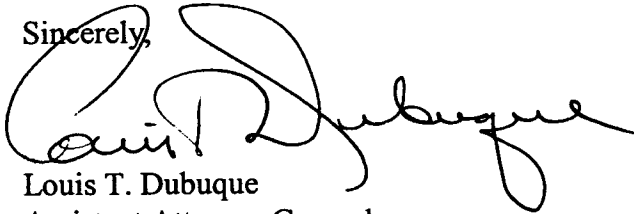
If this ruling requires or permits the governmental body to withhold all or some of the requested information, the requestor can appeal that decision by suing the governmental body. *Id.* § 552.321(a); *Texas Dep't of Pub. Safety v. Gilbreath*, 842 S.W.2d 408, 411 (Tex. App.—Austin 1992, no writ).

Please remember that under the Act the release of information triggers certain procedures for costs and charges to the requestor. If records are released in compliance with this ruling, be sure that all charges for the information are at or below the legal amounts. Questions or complaints about over-charging must be directed to Hadassah Schloss at the Texas Building and Procurement Commission at (512) 475-2497.

If the governmental body, the requestor, or any other person has questions or comments about this ruling, they may contact our office. We note that a third party may challenge this ruling by filing suit seeking to withhold information from a requestor. Gov't Code

§ 552.325. Although there is no statutory deadline for contacting us, the attorney general prefers to receive any comments within 10 calendar days of the date of this ruling.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Louis T. Dubuque", written over the word "Sincerely,".

Louis T. Dubuque
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

LTD/seg

Ref: ID# 227968

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Ms. Becky Hueem
St. Paul Travelers Insurance
1301 East Collins Boulevard
Richardson, Texas 75081
(w/o enclosures)